

## How do I protect myself?

### Tip #1: Use condoms.

Male and female condoms stop syphilis from spreading by preventing contact with sores. Touching sores that aren't covered can still spread syphilis.

### Tip #2: Avoid alcohol and drugs.

Drinking alcohol and using drugs can lead to unsafe sex. Avoiding alcohol and drugs can help prevent spreading syphilis.

### Tip #3: Talk to your sexual partner(s).

It's not always obvious that a sex partner has syphilis because syphilis sores can be hidden. Unless you know that your sex partner(s) has been tested and treated, you can be at risk.

### Tip #4: Get tested regularly.

If you have more than one sexual partner, get tested every 6 months. Syphilis is curable.

## Where can I go if I need free condoms?

### LACONDOM.COM

Free condoms can be mailed from the website to your home. You can also pick them up at nearly 300 sites in Los Angeles County.

## Who do I call if I need more information?

**Los Angeles County,  
Department of Public Health**

### Division on HIV & STD Programs

Phone: (213) 351-8000

[www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/dhsp](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/dhsp)



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
**Public Health**

# Syphilis:

## What Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) Need to Know



## What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by bacteria (germs). Many of its signs and symptoms are the same as other diseases.

## How does syphilis spread?

Syphilis is passed from person-to-person during vaginal, anal or oral sex. It can also pass through skin-to-skin contact with a syphilis sore. Pregnant women with syphilis can also pass the disease to their unborn child during pregnancy.

## What are the signs of syphilis?

Syphilis has different stages with different signs. Many people who have syphilis don't have signs for years.

- **Primary syphilis:** A painless sore on, around, or inside the penis, vagina, mouth, or anus that sometimes lasts 2-6 weeks and disappears by itself.
- **Secondary syphilis:** A contagious rash may appear on the body, hands, and feet. These symptoms may come and go for about 1 year.

- **Latent syphilis:** Symptoms usually go away by themselves and the person is no longer contagious to sex partners.

## How is syphilis treated?

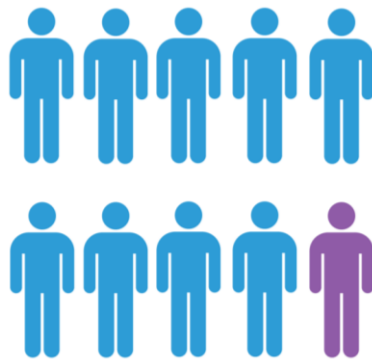
Syphilis is easily treated and cured with antibiotics. This medicine is given as a shot. Make sure both you and your sex partner(s) complete the treatment before having sex again.

## 5 Facts about Syphilis in Los Angeles County

Learn more and be aware of your risk.

**Fact #1:** More and more people have syphilis every year.

**Fact #2:** Almost 9 out of 10 people with syphilis are men who have sex with men (MSM).



**Fact #3:** In LA County, MSM of color are the most affected.

**Fact #4:** In 2012, more than half of LA County MSM had both syphilis and HIV.



**Fact #5:** The risk of getting HIV is higher for MSM who have syphilis.

